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AUTHOR Bert, Diane K.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the staff training and program installation techniques utilized by the Parent Readiness Education Project (PREP), a model early childhood education program. PREP was funded by the United States Office of Education to serve as a Developer/Demonstrator project to provide information, training, materials, and advice to school districts interested in implementing the PREP program. The first section of the paper discusses issues related to the training of the staff of the local educational agency involved in the implementation of the program. This section includes discussions of personnel, goals, methods, content, timing, and location of training. The selection of trainers for the program is also discussed. The second section of the paper includes a discussion of administrative issues involved in the implementation of the program in a school district. Also included in this section is a discussion of the importance of consultation and communication between the staff of the model program and the staff of the local school agency. The final section summarizes the conclusions and recommendations presented in the paper. (BD)

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PROBLEMS AND ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

STAFF TRAINING AND PROGRAM INSTALLATION

By

Diane K. Bert, Ph.D.

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Parent Readiness Education Project
Redford Union School District
18499 Beech Daly Rd.
Redford, Michigan 48240
(313) 535-2000

AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS: STAFF TRAINING AND PROGRAM INSTALLATION

By Diane K. Bert, Ph.D.

The Parent Readiness Education Project (PREP) is one of the select group of educational projects in the United States which has been examined by and validated by USOE and NIE and designated exemplary, successful, and worthy of replication in school districts throughout the United States. PREP is funded as a Developer/Demonstrator (D/D) and participates in the National Diffusion Network (NDN). A description of the NDN excerpted from Transferring Success follows:

> NDN, as the Network is known, has had a short and fruitful life. It was brought into existence in mid-1974 by the U.S. Office of Education, the administrator of most of the educational programs approved for funding by the U.S. Congress. The reason for NDN's existence can be traced back to 1965 when Congress passed the landmark Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). By providing federal funds to the states for the purpose of meeting specific educational needs of children, particularly low-income children, Congress opened the door to improving the education of every child in the land, rich or poor. In the following decade, some of the programs that local school districts developed with ESEA grants proved to be particularly effective at the site where they were first tried. However, hearsay was the only way most persons learned about the programs, and few outsiders were able to visit them. Now NDN is providing the opportunity for every school to share in the successes of the categorical programs that were included under ESEA--Title I ("compensatory" education) and Title III ("innovation")--as well as those funded under other federal education programs such as Right to Read.
>
> The effort began when the Education Division of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare named a Joint Dissemination Review Panel, a group of high-ranking education officials drawn from the Office of Education and the National Institute of Education. The panel's responsibility: to review and approve for dissemination (information-giving) purposes any federally funded education program or project that could offer persuasive, objective evidence it had produced significant change in the students it served. By the beginning of 1976, the panel had approved more than 130 programs...

USOE also funded 65 of the approved programs as "Developer/Demonstrator" projects during 1975-76. Developer-Demonstrators provide information, training, materials, and advice to school districts interested in their programs. Visits to Developer/Demonstrator sites give educators a chance to observe approved programs in a classroom setting and to ask questions of its developers and teachers who are implementing the program. When a school or district has decided to adopt, Developer/Demonstrators provide the following kinds of services: training of staff members at the program site and in the schools of the adopting district; follow-up and trouble-shooting during the installation of the program; technical assistance as needed; monitoring of the adoption; and evaluation of the results.

The PREP model has been successfully adopted in over fifty school districts ranging from rural to inner city areas. Populations served include Title I, Special Education, Headstart, and other students at risk, and it has also been adapted to normal children and gifted children and their parents.

The goals of the Parent Readiness Education Project are to develop skills for success in school in children with identified needs, to teach parents how to develop the skills in their children which are necessary for academic achievement, to help parents become more effective in nurturing the development of their young children, and to train high school students for effective parenthood.

Practitioners who developed successful programs are linked with practitioners with similar needs in search of successful models to implement to meet the needs identified in their local educational agencies (LEA's). In the four years that PREP has been active on a state and national level, many areas of concern relating to staff training and program installation have surfaced. The initial segment of this paper will examine phenomena relating to staff training. The middle segment will discuss the installation of programs, and finally conclusions and recommendations will be tendered.

TRAINING EDUCATORS

In the terminology of the National Diffusion Network, schools which elect to replicate one of the national models are called adopters or adapters. These terms will be used throughout the paper. The journalistic questions of why, who, what, how, where, and when will form the framework for examining training.

WHY TRAIN?

Millions of dollars in developmental funding have enabled the D/D's to develop refined techniques which can help others initiate programs that work while avoiding unnecessary snafus, field testing, and other early developmental stages. The programs were validated based upon techniques and materials originally used, it is important to maintain the fidelity of the model through training. Problems occur when some educators attempt to use materials only or modify the basic model to the point that it is not recognizable.

TRAIN WHO?

Our findings have indicated that it is valuable to train the immediately involved professional staff members, non-professional staff such as the teacher-aide and secretary, the administrator, and an ancillary support staff such as reading consultants, social workers, psychologists, etc. By training the secretary, an enormous amount of time is saved back in the LEA. Problems are sometimes encountered as administrators view themselves as too busy to attend, and/or are reluctant to release other support staff people. The PREP staff has now trained second and third sets of new teachers as there has been staff turnover in adopting districts.

WHAT CONTENT IN THE TRAINING?

The PREP staff has a different approach than most of the other D/D's in that we have a commitment to train adopters in the process of introducing innovations into school districts as well as the specific project content and techniques. Our hunch is that the time devoted to this is well spent. Such concepts as developing administration, community and board support are covered as well as public relations techniques. The building of vested interest and a sense of ownership is an important topic.

HOW TO TRAIN

Careful attention is paid to establishing a comfortable environment for educators in training. Conscientious efforts are made to learn the names of the trainees, provide refreshments for them, establish rapport, and seek their active involvement rather than passive listening. Varied approaches and presentation styles are utilized. Six hours seem to be a maximum amount of time per day for training. Minds need time to integrate new ideas and seek diversions.

Our experience has demonstrated that thorough written materials in the form of a manual to supplement oral presentations and for future reference are valuable to trainees. Defined goals and an agenda are also helpful, especially to counteract the problem tendency of some people to diverge off on less fruitful tangents.

WHERE TO TRAIN?

In an analysis of the evaluations of the PREP training sessions a strong trend appears toward a preference for training at the original PREP site. Adopting educators can become totally immersed in the PREP environment, examine materials, talk to parents, see the program in operation, see the room set ups,

and talk to PREP teachers. If training occurs elsewhere it is the project director or liaison/consultant who does the training. Teachers like the "nitty-gritty" discussions with fellow teachers.

WHEN TO TRAIN

The logistical demands prior to beginning the actual operation with clients are extensive in the PREP program. Therefore, a lead time is desirable. The PREP training staff tries to accomodate the needs of the adopters in scheduling training. Experience has shown that it is advantageous to train two or more LEA's simultaneously. The reasons for this are many:

more questions are generated

cross fertilation of ideas occurs

it is more cost effective

It enables the D/D staff to generate more enthusiasm

Other considerations also enter into specific scheduling. People often resent traveling on Sundays and Saturdays, so a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday combination is optimal. By anticipating factors such as the aforementioned, problems can be diminished or avoided.

TURNKEY TRAINERS

A frequently debated issue within the NDN is the use of turnkey trainers. Several key characteristics must exist in the PREP trainer: a high degree of familiarity with the model, actual work experience in the model, skills in interpersonal relationships, and a thorough knowledge of child development and parenting. Of major concern to D/D project directors is the maintenance of fidelity to the original model and the provision of optimal training for adopters. Most D/D's are reluctant to relinquish their own role as trainers or wish to have control over the selection or "certification" of trainers.

INSTALLATION OF PROGRAMS

After the training comes the true test of the commitment to adopt and the efficacy of the training. When adopters begin to implement the program it is inevitable that some problems will be encountered. Hopefully the staff will be equipped to handle them and the D/D staff will be available for consultation and assistance.

The nature of PREP is that usually new equipment must be purchased and/or assembled and an observation area must be built. Problems with union labor, fire marshals, and difficulties in obtaining one way glass do occur in some LEA's.

A critical factor is the degree of administrative support which exists to help solve problems. In one LEA the administrator is the main problem. His broken promises and fear of making waves interfere with program implementation. This is an exception, most administrators have been exceptionally resourceful in aiding implementation.

In one school building the principal seemed to be a "professional program shopper." In the course of one year he had mandated three new programs for his kindergarten teachers. Needless to say, this was not a successful adoption (and not considered an adoption by PREP). The teachers felt overburdened and confused. They had not been involved in the decision.

Perhaps the greatest problem faced by PREP as a D/D is the ethical and moral dilemna which arises when an adopter is pleased with the adoption and sees no problem but D/D staff sees a glaring problem. In one instance as the adopting project director proudly "showed off" the program in operation, two members of the D/D staff were dismayed at the excess amount of disorganization and visual stimulation in the classroom. What is the role of the D/D here?

Another problem arose when nine teachers teaching in Title I preschools

in nine elementary buildings wanted to adopt the PREP model. This meant combining sites and moving programs out of some buildings. The principals did not want to lose their autonomy and "guarded their turf" effectively sabotaging the adoption.

As adopters implement the model step by step, access to D/D consultant help is important. Frequent phone calls to the D/D site yield reassurance and solve problems.

There exists in the United States today a small but vocal minority of citizens opposed to preschool education. Their fears and opposition are based upon concern about lessening parental authority and influence upon young children. Some adopting school districts have encountered opposition from these groups. Their arguments are effectively countered by the design of the Parent Readiness Education Project, which recognizes and reinforces the importance of the parents' roles.

Careful attention to the feelings, fears, and apprehensions of educators affected by implementation of an innovative model is essential. As previously mentioned, this is an important topic in training. A written record of contacts between the D/D and the adopting LEA's helps clarify issues when more that one D/D staff member is involved in follow-up. The "Record of Contacts"; and "Implementation Checklist" in the Appendix are documents used during program installation. Problems can be avoided by carefully building community awareness as programs are implemented.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Anticipating possible problem areas and formulating plans for their avoidance are the most beneficial approaches in training for and implementing innovations. A thorough analysis of the philosophy and process of key elements

of the project, how best to communicate about them, and how best to train others in the techniques is necessary prior to training. It is important to have experts on the program immediately available to answer questions. Written documentation of all facets of the program for reference after the training is essential. During training there should be emphasis on project management as well as content.

Communicating a genuine desire to be helpful and an availability for consultations is essential in helping adopters through the implementation process. Following training adopters have a high degree of enthusiasm and eagerness to begin. Proper follow-up during implementation will help assure a continuation of this highly positive "can-do" attitude and the integrity of the replication. Tailoring programs to local needs helps assure an implementation which is comfortable for adopting educators.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Transferring Success. Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, San Francisco. 1976.

PREP--RECORD OF CONTACTS

SCHOOL DISTRICT_ _____ ADDRESS_____

TELEPHONE _____

DATE	PERSON/POSITION	SUBJECT	ACTION: CURRENT AND FUTURE (initialed by staff)

PARENT READINESS EDUCATION PROJECT
IMPLEMENTATION CHECK LIST

DATE	ACTIVITIES	DEGREE OF SATISFACTION:					EVIDENCE
		Yes	No	Minimal	Moderate	High	
	Training						
	Administration	—	—	—	—	—	
	Staff-professional	—	—	—	—	—	
	Staff-paraprofessional	—	—	—	—	—	
	Publicity						
	Community	—	—	—	—	—	
	Parents	—	—	—	—	—	
	School Personnel	—	—	—	—	—	
	Administrative Support	—	—	—	—	—	
	Board of Education Support	—	—	—	—	—	
	Facilities						
	Observation Room	—	—	—	—	—	
	Classroom	—	—	—	—	—	
	Parent Meeting Room	—	—	—	—	—	
	Equipment - Children						
	Furnishings	—	—	—	—	—	
	Small Motor	—	—	—	—	—	
	Large Motor	—	—	—	—	—	

	COMMENTS OR ANTICIPATED CHANGES

DATE	ACTIVITIES	DEGREE OF SATISFACTION					EVIDENCE
	Equipment - Children	Yes	No	Minimal	Moderate	High	
	Supplies	___	___	___	___	___	
	PEEK	___	___	___	___	___	
	Peabody	___	___	___	___	___	
	Visual	___	___	___	___	___	
	Auditory	___	___	___	___	___	
	Equipment - Parents						
	Curriculum Material	___	___	___	___	___	
	Books	___	___	___	___	___	
	Miscellaneous Supplies	___	___	___	___	___	
	Screening						
	Selecting Target Pop.	___	___	___	___	___	
	Observations of Program In Operation						
	Classromm	___	___	___	___	___	
	Schedule	___	___	___	___	___	
	Activities	___	___	___	___	___	
	Parent Group	___	___	___	___	___	
	Home Activities	___	___	___	___	___	
	High School Students	___	___	___	___	___	

If any problems have been encountered, please describe the problem and strategies used to resolve the

Other comments and questions:

	COMMENTS OR ANTICIPATED CHANGES

m.